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THREE DAYS IN THE HIGHLANDS.

AN EPILOGUE, IN THREE VOICES.

INTRODUCTORY, BY REGINALD A——, ESQ.—THE FALSE START.

IN the middle of July, having some leisure and no immediately engrossing amusement, I undertook the charge of two elderly female friends, whose hearts were set on a short ramble in the Highlands. When I say that three days was the proposed amount of time to be spent in this excursion, it will be apparent that the call upon my patience and fortitude was not so overwhelming as might appear by the first statement. And let me tell you that such a trip is by no means to be despised in the absence of greater attractions, when one is in want of a new sensation. The flutter of enjoyment conveyed to the mature female bosom, by attentions which are not always duly appreciated by their natural objects, is agreeable alike to one's benevolent feelings and to one's personal vanity. One has the satisfaction of combining amusement with the happy sensation of having done a good action; and one is rewarded by the simple flatteries, the delight, the excitement, and the friendly jealousy of the good old souls whom one takes in hand. Altogether, I recommend the experiment to any man of good feelings, who has nothing better to do. It is less captivating, certainly, than the service of those dangerous and delusive sirens, who, alas! have it all their own way in the susceptible heart; but it is infinitely safer—and the true benevolence of the action cannot fail to strike every feeling soul.

Accordingly, I got up with heroism at a preposterous hour on the profoundly cloudy morning of St Swithin's Day. It was a mere temptation of the watery saint to start at such a moment; but having got up my courage to the height

of goodness necessary, I was not to be held back even on the 15th of July by a shower. It looked so unpromising, however, that I sauntered down to the pier, in comfortable anticipation of going back to breakfast. What were my astonishment and dismay to see my fair companions seated already on a damp bench on the damp deck of the steamer, with luggage boldly labeled for the farthest point of the projected voyage, may be better imagined than described. Of course I joined them on board, though without a coat or a toothbrush, in the primitive simplicity of my morning jacket. The scene was amusing, as may be supposed. Around us stretched an indefinite expanse of mist, which experience and faith alike declared to be Clyde, with all its various banks and ports, but which sight pronounced to be nothing save a damp horizon of fog, heightened in effect by smoke and rain, all condensed within the enclosing firmament of cloud. Clouds blurred the sky—clouds enveloped the wooded banks—clouds closed in the busy piers and dock-yards of the murky town of Greenock. Wherever one looked, nothing but clouds met one's eye, amid which appeared dolefully, as one neared the shore, a pale spectrum of that enchanting coast. Such was the external scene into which the little steamer plunged boldly over the dead-calm, mist-enveloped water. On deck sat my female friends, disputing the question, investigating the sky, appealing to me and to the clouds, to the helmsman and the porters—*Would it be a fine day?—would it clear up?—should they go forward or go back?* The climax of the business appeared in the person of a friend not exactly of

my own inches, who audibly offered me the contents of his port-manteau, with a self-abnegation unusual to modern friendship. I flatter myself I am not vain—but when a fellow half your size offers you the use of his wardrobe, you naturally decline the offer, however benevolent may be its intention. Resolute not to shrink from my post, but deeply conscious of my defective provision for it, I stood watching with some anxiety the decision of my fair companions. The state of puzzled and comical uncertainty in which they sat was amusing enough to withdraw from his own circumstances even the thoughts of a man starting upon a Highland excursion without a shirt, a wrapper, or a toothbrush. The good creatures consulted the skies, and my face, and each other, with a pertinacity possible only to women—their eagerness, their doubts, their anxiety to take everybody's opinion, their uneasy shifting of responsibility from one pair of shrinking shoulders to another, was as good as a scene in a comedy; and whether it would have come to a decision, but for the sudden appearance of

the steamboat in which the further voyage was to be performed, packed from stern to bows with Glasgow excursionists, I cannot tell. That sight, however, settled the question. Mists, clouds, and even rain, might be overcome; but what resolution could stand against the society of a Glasgow mob of pleasure-seekers? My companions yielded to the dire compulsion; they turned back, damp and mournful; and with a pathetic parting we separated till the next day. Of course, an hour after, the morning cleared up and became radiant.

The next day, however, we set out, and the following narrative of the journey, conveyed as it is in the natural and unsophisticated utterance of my fair charges, will no doubt be grateful to many intending tourists in this early season. My modesty has impelled me to delete many of the flattering remarks addressed to myself; but, with this trifling exception, I have not ventured to tamper with the tale of my fellow-travellers, who have each contributed to this brief but eventful passage the history of a day.

THE FIRST DAY.—COMMUNICATED BY MISS ARABELLA W.—

On Tuesday, as good a day as ever is to be had in the Highlands, we set out upon our little tour under the kind guardianship of our excellent young friend, whose kindness, indeed, can never be sufficiently estimated. The earliest beginning of our course lay along the sweet banks of the Gair Loch, all broken into tiny bays, and wooded points rich with the fullest foliage, to where the shores of the Clyde slope downward to Loch Long. The sun was shining, and all the outlines stood out clear against the distinct but pale sky of the Highland summer. The scene was not Italian certainly, but I am not sure that the atmosphere and brightness of a southern climate would have suited those hills, which began to rise grand,

but not too solemn, in a hundred irregular lines out of the horizon. A blaze of sunshine would but have transfixed in speechless grandeur those huge shoulders and heights of rock and heather; whereas the constant motion and progress of light and shadow sets a perpetual drama astir among those bold and graceful hills, and keeps one's interest constantly engaged. I confess—though no one can be more glad than I to see the city-bound escaping for a holiday—I do confess that the steamer, with its noise and its clangour, with the flute and the fiddle playing in concert, with parties out for the day filling all the seats, is not conducive, so far as I am concerned, to the enjoyment of fine scenery. The music reduced me to that aggra-

vating condition, in which, though your mind is mentally disgusted with the unseasonable melody, your foot unconsciously keeps time; and the pleasant family-attentions bestowed by amiable mothers upon their children, and the naïve remarks of Glasgow tourists bound for Lochgoilhead, were sadly distracting to behold and listen to. I have seen a good deal of fine scenery in my day, and am an enthusiast in mountainous landscapes; but I cannot think I ever saw anything finer than Loch Long—threading its way in stretches, sometimes silvery, sometimes purple and golden, sometimes leaden-blue under a sudden shadow, deep into the silent heart of the hills. The sentiment belonging to a river is entirely different. A volume of joyous water rushing out from its mountainous cradle, carries the mind with it into the sea and the world; but that narrow enterprising current penetrating inward—making its way through passes of momentary gloom, widening wherever it can into bursts of sunshine, curving out sweet bays and indentations into the very substance of the hills, and subsiding twenty miles inland on a quiet shore amid an amphitheatre of mountains, with tidal sighs, half of satisfaction, half of longing, conveys an impression more profound and striking than any stream. Every step you advance up that narrow, wonderful channel changes the aspect of the scene. The very steamboat takes a certain colour of poetry. Look how the dark sprite pauses, or seems to pause, with a dismayed stagger of dread, the dark smoke floating confusedly over her head in that dark pass through which there seems no outlet! It is not a Glasgow steamboat, with a flute and a fiddle, and a mob of excursionists; it is a conscious creature going blindly forward, with a certain awful ignorance, into the gloom of fate.

And now the hills open up to the left hand, and Loch Goil gleams into another hollow, amid another line of mountains. At the point

where the one loch darts out of the other begins that range of heights given by the magnificent popular imagination to the house of Argyll with a subtle flattery not to be surpassed. Imagine what a grandeur must have surrounded the MacCallan More to that Celtic fancy which named Argyll's Bowling-Green! Are these the ancient giants up among the mists echoing their throws in sportive thunder, who gave its earliest origin to the race of Diarmid? But there is neither thunder nor mist to-day upon Argyll's Bowling-Green. The heights rise and cluster inward to the fantastic Cobbler, who sits silent over Glen Croe in his never-ending toil. But the moment you turn up Loch Goil, you naturally revert to another Campbell, not less illustrious than the chief of the name. Is not Lord Ullin raving on the cliffs in perennial rage and remorse? But it is calm on Loch Goil this morning: the tide sweeps peacefully upward to the perfect curve of its hilly basin. A lonely castle in leafy ruin—a farm-steading almost too sunny and comfortable, the Elysian solitude of here and there a cottage, alone breaking upon the summer calm. If I am thought too lofty in my description, let me recommend all unbelievers to follow our track over those dark yet sunny waters. If they travel in the society of two congenial souls and a good glass, so much the better.

All this time my two friends have been heightening my enjoyment of the scenery by their vivid observations and reflections. My friend Kate is short, stout, and merry, though she is a woman who has had her losses. We were not acquainted in very early youth, so I will not venture to say what her attractions may have been in that remote period. But at present I am bound to confess that *she looks her full age*, and having the good sense to wear a bonnet (which I think only becoming for a person come to her time of life), no delusion is possible on the subject.

Standing by the side of our handsome young friend, one naturally perceives the full force of the contrast. I must say that so great is my sense of the goodness of our disinterested cavalier, that I could be content to re-enter the perils of earlier life, and become young and pretty again, for his sake. Dear young man! the amiable way in which he listens to Kate's observations, and enters into the spirit of the excursion, is refreshing to a mind wearied with the coldness and neglect of the world. One thinks better of one's kind after meeting with such chivalrous attentions. In earlier days, indeed, one might have imagined that there was a *motive* for his devotion; but, alas! time and the hour have put that *entirely* out of the question. I have a niece who perhaps might in some degree—but it is useless to calculate on girls. The friendship of a woman who knows her own mind is, if young people could only understand it, a much more trustworthy object to depend upon.

On arriving at Lochgoilhead, according to an arrangement concluded upon at a former period, we took the coach for Inverary, and with the fortitude peculiar to women of this age, mounted the top of the coach. Having gone heroically through this process, we found ourselves in very amusing company. The driver of the coach to Inverary—of course a Campbell—is well worthy of introduction to the public. Not to enter too fully into personal particulars, which in a coachman a lady cannot be expected to observe with any minuteness, I may say that our young friend pronounced him a handsome fellow, and that my own observation confirmed the statement. How the Campbells got to be called the dark sons of Diarmid I cannot imagine, since my own experience proves them to be *red*, with scarcely an exception—the most illustrious as well as the most humble. John of the Inverary coach has the mouth of a mime hidden in a handsome florid

beard, and is great in imitations and sketches of character. The way in which he subdues his round, Scotch, Campbell voice into the sharp pipe of an English lady tourist, is astonishing; but I will not venture to reproduce these inimitable sketches. How the excellent stout Englishman on the box beside him refrained from any attempt to pitch him over the side, I cannot understand. I presume it must be the placidity of the Cockney temper—a smoothness unknown on this side of the Tweed; for sure am I that had I heard my own dear country-people libelled with equal freedom, I should have demanded to be set down instantly, had it been in the most savage wilds of Cumberland or Derbyshire. Our fat friend, however, bore it with the utmost good-humour, even though it was in the presence of ladies, and displayed an inclination to communicate his sentiments to me, and to enter into agreeable conversation, which was certainly complimentary. When it rained—as of course it did four times in the two hours occupied by the journey—this good man bore the dripping of my umbrella upon the shoulder, which he turned perseveringly towards me (you will understand that he sat in front, and we on the seat behind), with the most praiseworthy equanimity. He had evidently a perception of the charms of good society, though not what you could call a man of fine manners or high breeding in his own person. These personal particulars, however, keep me from the scenery; and indeed I must confess that dear Kate shocked me not a little by the levity with which she permitted her attention to be diverted from the hills to the coachman's narratives and recitations. The conversation, however, was brought to a sudden conclusion by an ill-advised question on her part, whether it would be possible to reach Loch Awe that same night? John was indignant—the idea of passing over Inverary, and making it the mere scene of a lunch or tra-

veller's dinner, offended his highest sympathies. Thenceforward he deserted Kate, and addressed himself to another passenger, who did not abuse his confidence.

But while the sound of their conversation went on at my ear, I devoted myself to the lovely landscape through which we were passing. Leaving the salt-water lochs, those wistful investigations of the "homeless sea" into the lone recesses of the hills, we plunged into the world of opening slopes which make a mountainous country so full of interest. Here a gleam of lovely valley, with lonely houses hidden in light clouds of tender birch, or pillared solitudes of fir—there a brown cottage on a height, all brown, thatch and wall, growing out of the soil like a natural production; and on every side great living walls of hills, silent, with silver threads of water descending their steep, or plaintive with pathetic bleatings, mournful incessant voice of the wilderness. But now our attention was distracted by a discussion on the poor-laws, which, the gentlemen having been requested to descend while we mounted the hill, was addressed almost exclusively to Kate and myself, and listened to by *her* with provoking indifference to the landscape. Fancy discussing poor-laws with a Campbell coachman while winding up the picturesque ascents of Hell's Glen! I cannot deny that I was considerably disgusted. For myself, I confess that the absence of human habitations does by no means injure the landscape in my opinion. I like the unbroken splendour of the primitive mountains. But dear Kate, who loves to talk, and who had at the moment no better interlocutor, entered into a discussion of rates and local necessities with the warmest interest, and lamented over the charming solitude, as if a dirty hamlet and crowds of Gaelic children could have added quite an additional attraction to that solitary glen. Human interest—that is the expression. Dear Kate, I am sorry to say, is often carried away by the fashionable talk of the time.

When we reached the top of the ascent, Inverary burst upon us—lying lovely, with a sweet peacefulness, reflecting all her boats and houses in the tender-tinted water. You do not see the long stretch of Loch Fyne from that height—only a lovely bay folded in with hills, one of minor size, but wooded to a thought, rising just over the sombre pepper-boxes of the Castle. One could fancy a great Argyll coming here out of the fighting world, as to a haven of absolute rest and tranquillity. Can troubles come over those hills? Do any whispers of the angry surf ever steal upward through the reaches of the loch upon those gentle palpitating tides? I suppose it is possible; but to glide over the crisped and tinted waters towards that halcyon shore, with its boats lying round the little pier, and its houses slumbering on the beach, it is difficult to imagine such a retreat as open to the invasions of the common world.

Notwithstanding what I say, we had a proof of those invasions in the various groups accompanying our own steps. Our stout Englishman, all unromantic as he looked, was bound to some picturesque solitude in the neighbourhood which he had rented for the summer—though what could have brought such a person to the Highlands it is hard to imagine. Perhaps his wife was a Campbell—though, indeed, I should rather imagine, from the perseverance with which he held his shoulder under the drip of my umbrella, that the good man was a widower, probably with an interesting family of children. Be that as it may, he disappeared placidly in a dog-cart from Inverary, and we saw him no more. Being accustomed to travelling on the Continent, neither Kate nor I had the smallest objection to dining at the *table d'hôte*, which we were told existed in the Inverary hotel; but you may imagine our consternation when we found ourselves in a small family-party, with two strangers, apparently newly-married people. Our young friend was placed at the

head of the table, and discharged the agreeable functions of host, with a great sirloin to carve, and all the other duties of hospitality to attend to. The excellent nature of this amiable young man, who is full of kindness, carried him triumphantly through the difficulties of the position; but the idea of having to carve and dispense, and make polite inquiries—"May I send you a little beef?"—to the chance guests of a *table d'hôte*! I myself watched over the plate of the Glasgow lady, and helped her to potatoes, and she and her spouse listened in edified silence to the lively conversation of our little party. Dear Kate, as I have before mentioned, loves to talk, and our young friend's conversation is most improving and instructive. But it would be unkind to let this opportunity pass without warning the unwary against the *table d'hôte* of the Inverary inn.

At Inverary we held a council, touching our further progress, and receiving assurances, both printed and verbal, that coaches to Dunkeld were to be met with at Dalmally, we started, blithe and confident, in a pretty waggonette, with two famous horses, for the banks of Loch Awe. The sun had gone hopelessly into the clouds, and Ben Cruachan was invisible when we reached the wistful shore at Cladich, but the loch itself opened fair before us in all the shadowless twilight glory of the holy hour. Silent as a nun was the lovely breadth of water, with all its fairy bays and promontories; and as we came opposite the distant

pass, where "the Awe's fierce river" rushes out of the loch, nothing grander could be conceived. The western sky, with some reflections of the invisible sun, filled up the wild and solemn opening cleft among the hills, and threw a gleam upon the dark distant water which fretted forth in that narrow channel towards the sea. Looking over the gleaming calm of the loch to that distant dark defile, with the piles of mountain breaking across, and the ruddy western glory interposing at every inlet, was such a scene as I can never forget. But I am urged to hasten my course, and reminded that I have already occupied my full share of the permitted space. I might say a great deal more, but I refrain. My friend naturally wishes to give her own account of what followed. In conclusion, we reached Dalmally in time to stray out in the sweet though somewhat damp gloaming, past the peaceful manse of Glenurchy—where the minister, venerable man, was wandering in his fields, like Isaac at eventide, no doubt meditating his next Sunday's sermon—to the bridge over the river, where we mused in silence upon the broad brown noiseless stream, and finally returned to the inn, to spend the evening in friendly conversation—a conversation in which my own natural enthusiasm and the varied experience of my friend blended in a manner, I trust as delightful to them as to me, with the youthful fervour and eloquence of our accomplished companion. How sweet is such friendly communion!

SECOND DAY.—COMMUNICATED BY MRS CATHERINE S.—

Yes! perfectly true; but there may be too much of it, in my opinion; especially when it is all between two of the party, and the third is put out of the way upon the box.

Next day was a wet day, as I always expected. When people do not start on the day they fix for starting, in spite of everything that can be said to them, though it turns out a charming day, they have no

right to expect good weather, in my opinion. I made up my mind from the first that we should have rain, and consequently was not taken by surprise when it came. At Dalmally, of course, we learned that the coaches had not yet begun to run, or at least, if they had begun, they were to be heard of at Tyndrum or Crianlarich, or some hideous village or other, where nobody could

speaking English; and the only expedient was to drive in a dog-cart to that scene of certainty. But before going there we must needs start in the same conveyance on a voyage to Loch Awe, to see, in mist and rain, what we had seen the night before in clear but not brilliant twilight. Arabella, with that assumption of sprightliness which is so disgusting in a person come to her time of life (she affects to be two years younger than I am, but I am not sure, if the parish registers could be got at, whether the tables might not be turned in *that* respect)—Arabella jumped into the back seat of the vehicle, that I might have, as she said, the best seat. Because she is unmarried, she thinks herself entitled to take all the airs of youth. Preposterous notion! but it makes her very absurd, poor thing, though she cannot see it. Young Mr A—— helped me into the front with the greatest attention, quite unconscious of her trick, and joined her himself, as of course she had intended all the time, in the back seat of the gig. Off we went, facing the blast; and if any one should be disposed to envy the front seat, let them imagine me seated beside a damp driver, with the rain full in my face, and Arabella and young A—— chatting behind me with the most intolerable levity, never so much as looking at the landscape, as far as I could see. I said nothing; in spite of all Arabella's remarks about my conversation with the coachman the day before, and her sentimental assumptions, I am not the woman to turn upon my friend. So I calmly put up my umbrella, and looked at the view. When we reached Kilchurn, I could hear the ridiculous old thing repeating the ballad about it, as if she had been a young girl. I confess it was aggravating; as for me, I had the driver to talk to; and when I found out from him that Monday had been a beautiful day, and that it was all her fault in not starting at the proper time, I really could not restrain my indignation.

Mrs S——.—“Arabella, dear, if you have a moment's time to spare, just listen. It was a lovely day on Monday, and they had not a drop of rain, the man says.”

The first answer I heard was a peal of laughter; then, in a quivering voice, Arabella spoke—

“I have no doubt it will clear up to-day, still. You can't think what a pretty gleam comes from your wet umbrella, dear. It must be from the sun, you know. The sun must be somewhere about, I am convinced. And look yonder, what a strange light on the hills!”

Mr A——.—“Strange darkness, too. Look at that hollow there; how the gloom creeps and gathers! Will you have the glass, Mrs S——? Famous atmosphere for the hills, you know—quite Highland weather. Look here, exactly what Christopher describes—‘a vast mysterious hollow.’ The mist is lifting—look! We shan't see Ben Cruachan, but only wait till the sun breaks out.”

Mrs S——.—“Yea. Only wait. Next week, perhaps; and we can stay at Dalmally, and have a few lessons in the language. Whereas if we had started on Monday, as I always intended——”

Miss Arabella.—“Dear Mr A——, only look here. How fine those mists are, floating and dipping like veils—and that hollow, how grand! Hark! it creeps. To say that is only negative, you know—want of light—is absurd. It is positive darkness raying out of the hill—and that eldritch gleam yonder. Don't tell me it is not out of the heart of the mountain. There is some silvery pool, or something invisible, that sheds that reflection. It is fairy light.”

Mrs S——.—“Stuff! I am getting very wet about the feet, and this man tells me there is no such thing as a coach, whatever we do. The landscape is very fine, but I don't believe you are looking at it in the least.”

This produced another foolish burst of laughter. I own I was entirely disgusted with Arabella—

talk of levity, indeed! When we returned to the inn, of course it became perfectly evident that there was no hope of any coach. I did not waste any time in words. I saw by this time that we were doomed, and would have to go on in dog-carts to—heaven knows where. I rushed into the kitchen, which was the only place where there was a fire, and took my measures immediately. After some trouble I succeeded in getting a nice wincey petticoat from the landlady, which I put on over my gown—an excellent plan, which I recommend to any lady travelling in the Highlands; and with my cloak covering my shoulders, resigned myself to my fate. Of course I scorned, after having been put upon the box, to accept any other place; but, ascending to my perch, made myself as comfortable as was practicable under the circumstances. The two in the seat behind had some rugs, and young A——, who, between ourselves, is a great flirt, and, like some girls I know of, spares neither old nor young, arranged them round Arabella, who, poor old creature, gave herself the most ridiculous languishing airs, enough to send any one into fits of laughter. In this style we set off on one of the most beautiful roads I ever travelled. I can say so with confidence, as my prospect and enjoyment of it were quite undisturbed. When I called the attention of the people behind to the beautiful mountains all bedropped and enveloped in white floating mists, which every breath of wind moved and lifted, I was replied to with ridiculous jokes and laughter. There never was anything more absurd. The harder it rained, and the grander the prospect became, the more they talked and giggled. When I turned to point out the beautiful Highland hills to them, they were lost in discussions about Italy. Indeed I don't know what they did not talk of, sheltered as they were from the blast by my own unfortunate figure and that of the driver, who was quite disposed to

enter into the hilarity of the party, and to make one aware that he appreciated the gaiety of the two in the back seat. On me it fell, not only to bear the blast of rain, but to maintain a dignified deportment, and neutralise the folly of my two companions. Of course it was all very natural and proper on the part of young A——, who amused himself, as was to be expected; but that Arabella, a woman of some sense, should be so ridiculous as to give any young man such a chance of laughing at her, is more than I can understand, take it how you will. Ridiculous old thing!

And, of course, as I have said already, there was no coach at Tyn-drum. I knew it perfectly. Departing from the day you intend to start, and altering the route that you have taken pains to mark out, what can you expect in a journey? The only thing was to go on in dog-carts:—and in dog-carts we went on accordingly, with the rain pouring down steadily, the hills opening up quite wonderful and grand, and the two in the back seat taking not a bit of notice, but chattering about every subject under the skies with an utter indifference to the view, and the rain, and me. I really own I felt ashamed of them. To hear an elderly woman maundering on in such a fashion is quite insufferable, in my opinion. Nobody likes a little pleasant conversation better than I do; but there are times and places for everything. In the mean time, I enjoyed the scenery particularly. I had full advantage of it: there was nothing to break the blast which beat upon *me*, nobody to interrupt *my* meditations. I can't say that I ever enjoyed such an uninterrupted view of any landscape; and I can assure you that it is quite a mistake to be so particular about good weather when you go to the Highlands. Through that rain and mist the hills looked perfectly charming. Through Glenurchy and Glen Dochart they kept rising and opening in continued beauty; and while the only response I could get

from the back seat was the foolish answer that it was no doubt very fine if they could see it, I did see it, and found it wonderful. It is therefore my advice to tourists: If the day is a wet day, never mind—get something to cover you over (and for a lady, in my opinion, nothing is better than a good skirt), and go straight on, and keep your eyes open. But to lose a day out of mere nonsense, you know, after you have quite settled upon your journey, and to be seduced into abandoning an old and well-considered route for a new and hastily-seized one, with coaches uncertain, and dog-carts unsatisfactory; and to feel all the time a regret for that lost day, which it is quite impossible to forget, as if you were for ever hunting it, and could never reach it, is the greatest annoyance imaginable. Any feeling person will understand my sentiments, as I went driving over the country with nothing between me and the blast, and with two people behind me talking and enjoying themselves, actually without a single thought of the landscape which they had come all this way to see; and dear, dear me, to think of that poor old Arabella! Fancy her, poor thing, imagining herself young again, and dreaming about communion of souls! Privately, on the front seat, I was in agonies of silent laughter; but my friendly feelings, you know, eventually gained the upper hand. I could bear to laugh at her myself, but not to see other people laugh at her. And really, after all, though she is foolish, and adopts little youthful airs, and behaves ridiculous enough sometimes, at the bottom she is a dear friend of mine, and a good old soul! The aggravating circumstance of all, however, was the loss of that Monday. I made a point of asking all the people at the inns, and all the drivers, what sort of a day it was, and the answer was invariable, A lovely day! and we had actually turned back and sacrificed it for no reason in this world but Arabella's weak-

minded nonsense! I really could scarcely contain myself when I realised how it was.

At length we came down upon Loch Tay, through a lovely wooded road, which I remember years ago. I had seen Loch Tay, and was twenty times more interested in it for my companions' sake than for my own. The lights and clouds which had been so favourable for the hilla, were not so suitable, I am obliged to confess, for that loch, which is neither like Loch Awe nor Loch Lomond, nor any other loch but itself, all heavenly and serene as it is, with Taymouth sitting splendid at its head. It ceased to rain as we came along those wooded banks, which I remember so distinctly, and which I was only anxious to point out to the others. I could hear that poor dear Arabella was talking deep sentiment by this time, from which I perceived that the current was getting exhausted; and she actually did condescend to pay some attention as we went on, the rain having ceased at last. Loch Tay, however, wants sunshine. It lay gleaming all dark before me, with a look (though I am not given to sentiment), a visible look, of something having gone out of it since those days when I saw it first. Ah me! I daresay not only myself upon the box, with my umbrella up, steadfastly looking at the view, but poor dear Arabella with all her little follies, and even that excellent young A—— himself, who might be our son, as far as age goes, had our own thoughts going trudging on with us, all the same, every step of the way. I never heard that anybody ever got free of those companions; and when I looked at that loch, many a scene unseen to my friends came up before me. It was the same as ever, long and tranquil and shining, with two great banks all rich with wood projecting out into the water, like a kind of grand portal to the basin on which Taymouth is planted; but something had gone out of it since last I saw it—out of it or out of my eyes—

something never to return any more.

I hope nobody will suppose I am sentimentally minded—quite the reverse is the case. I resolved to take the management of the whole matter into my own hands after this, and quite to exclude Arabella from having anything to do with it. In this spirit I got down at the pretty new inn at Kenmore, got the most charming rooms, a famous fire and tea, without consulting anybody. Arabella came in looking a little ashamed of herself, and young A—much amused, as was natural. Then began a comical scene. I set their enormities before them, as was proper; and Arabella, poor old soul! with all the consciousness of guilt, began to justify herself. She declared she had seen everything all along the way; she protested she

could not tell what I meant. She went into an elderly flutter and palpitation, and appealed to young A—whether she had been doing anything wrong. Actually the dear old creature believed she had been flirting, and did not know what to say for herself. Was there ever anything more absurd? If I had been silent all day long, I assure you I had the laugh on my side now. And so ended the day we spent in dog-carts, driving through the rain from Loch Awe to Loch Tay. I am merciful. I let Arabella off. I said no more about it; but I must say it was not for nothing that I spent that day in silence with my umbrella up, seeing more hills and mists than I ever saw in my life, and put out of the way by my companions, under pretence of giving me the best seat, upon the driving-box.

THIRD DAY.—BY REGINALD A—, ESQ.

After the narratives of my fair friends, I need not enter into any explanation of the little difficulties and hitches of the journey. The good old ladies enjoyed it, I don't doubt, in spite of all, and were as good friends as ever, like a pair of old doves, the next morning, when the missing sun presented himself, and we were at length able to set out with comfort on foot to see the beautiful grounds of Taymouth. I got along with them famously, I am glad to say, and was able, with a little trouble, to make myself agreeable in a way flattering to a fellow's self-regard who has had his disappointments in the service of woman, like most other people. The greatest bore in it all was when one happened to meet an acquaintance, and was led to mention, in a cursory way, that one was in charge of a party of ladies, never thinking that the venerable companions of one's voyage were about to sally forth, and dissipate at a blow that agreeable illusion. But indeed a man must be more hard-hearted than I can boast of being,

who would grudge the trouble which gave those good creatures their innocent holiday. I don't mean to say I should be very ready to undertake it again; but I don't regret the three days.

And what a famous place Taymouth is, when one gets a little sunshine to see it by! A beautiful loch in front, quite by itself, and unlike all the other lochs; famous wood, unlimited shooting, and a princely size and style of place altogether. I should not mind going down there on the 12th, or any period presently thereafter, at the chieftain's pleasure—nor, indeed, of bestowing my leisure upon him, whenever he thinks fit to honour me with an invitation. I don't know a better specimen of composed and sober grandeur; and with all those beautiful glades and trees about—the trout in the Tay and the deer on the hill—a man might manage to be a Marquess without feeling inevitably doomed to bore himself to death. I am not sure, however, that I don't prefer the Duke of Atholl's quiet cottage es-

tablishment at Dunkeld, where that same Tay makes nature beautiful. The drive down the valley (accomplished, not in a dog-cart, but with dignity in a carriage, where we were all inside, and I—my modesty will scarcely permit me to write the words—was able to divide my attentions equally) was calm, but agreeable. Neither the society nor the scenery were exciting; and the exceptional character of yesterday's proceedings in the rain having subsided into common comfort, no incident occurred worth mentioning. The feature of Dunkeld, as everybody knows, is the river; and nobody can possibly expect me to describe that well-known scene. Arabella might, but I doubt whether it would be to edification. The day was calm, and, as I have said, not exciting in its enjoyment, and the evening was amicably spent in lamentations over our approaching separation, and settling of the route by which the fair travellers were to proceed when I left them the next morning—a matter not concluded without trouble. The tendency women have to go back upon their decisions, and reconsider the whole matter, is remarkable. I wonder if they carry it equally into all the arrangements of life.

Next morning I took my fair friends into Perth, and placed them in the railway carriage which was to convey them back into the bosoms of their families. I will not attempt to describe the trembling lip, the suppressed sigh, the falter-

ing and too-feeling acknowledgments with which this parting was accomplished. When the inexorable train plunged out of sight, one of the kind creatures was bending forward, her eager lips moving with some last words; but my melancholy fate prevented me hearing that affecting message. With their heads full of lochs and mountains, mists and torrents, and with, I am bound to say, an amount of gratitude highly gratifying to receive, but which I do not feel myself to have deserved in its full extent, my fair companions disappeared out of these latitudes; and I went on my way rejoicing.

At this moment I sit in a very different scene, at a sunny window, overlooking, through half-cut openings in the trees, a distant scene of sea and city, too charming to be indicated more plainly—but at a nearer point of vision, overlooking the lawn from which the battered but bland face of that new denizen of polite society known as "Aunt Sally" beams upward benignant upon my thoughtful gaze. Last night a little group of figures gathered round that venerable vision. Ah me! can you imagine any region in the world to which one would not wander joyfully in such company? The hand that poises that skilful missile, dispenses fate and fortune. Miss Arabella was a judge more lenient. I was somebody while I was the champion and guard of the dear old ladies. A creature of eighteen is competent to put her yoke upon me now.*

* I add a note. I recall the concluding word of the penultimate paragraph above. A week has come and gone since I bade farewell to the companions of these three days. Ever after—day by day—even amid the excitement of Aunt Sally and Louisa's smiles, their memory has come back to me with a gratefulness of tenderly lingering fancy that does not diminish, but is increasing still. I bless the day I started on our tour. I bless the day of the dog-carts. Blessed among all days be the day spent between Taymouth and Dunkeld. Instead of going, like Christian, on my way "rejoicing," as rashly stated above, I recall the souvenir of Lord Ullin, which our first day's voyage brought to mind, and say, that on the last of that eventful pilgrimage I was, like him, "left lamenting." No more.